

Spring 2019

# The Tribute

An Air Force Museum Society of Alberta publication



## *Chair's update*

By Don Matthews

Please allow me to start the New Year with a heart felt thank you to all of our volunteers who continue to serve the museum and the greater community. Your cheerful and welcoming smiles and the way you engage our guests is becoming a hall mark of our museum – and a good one to have. The two volunteer appreciation events were well attended. The Air Force bowling evening in November and the museum's wide Christmas party were once again great opportunities to meet the men and women with whom you serve but seldom see. A special thank you to Jim for his work on the bowling evening and to Jennifer and Kara who made the Christmas party so memorable.

Our unique situation (one of seven museums here at TMM and one of 11 RCAF Museums across Canada) came to the fore on three occasions. A major historical day long symposium on WW I here in Calgary received an excellent Air Force perspective thanks to the great work of Major Bill March who flew in from Trenton to give his speech. In November the Lt. Gov hosted an event in Edmonton. 4 Wing provided Air Force personnel and we provided the historical backdrops.

Further a field the 1st RCAF Museum Committee Meeting was held in Trenton on the 22nd of November. I attended along with our curator for the three day event. The RCAF is making progress as the

orders are written and the doctrine developed to ensure that history and heritage remains a strong component of the RCAF. Discussions were lively and informed as we worked our way through financial and operational concerns that we all share.

To quote from the chair: "The chair thanked all participants and reiterated the strategic importance of history and heritage for the RCAF, the continued need to showcase our heritage and the need to make sure the programme and associated governance remains in place . . . he reiterated that he would ensure that H&H issues in general, and museum concerns in particular, are brought to the attention of the highest levels of the RCAF chair of command.

Of note, we were briefed at the meeting that preparations commence this year to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the RCAF in 2024. We expect to have a major role to play in that historic event.

In closing I would like to thank 783 (Calgary) Wing RCAFA for including us in the biennial general meeting celebrations. Our members attended most of the events and we were honoured to host an event in the CF 18 shelter.

That's all for now.

Standby for further.

# The directors & staff

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Cover photo: RCAF F-18 with the NORAD 60th anniversary paint  
scheme at the Cold Lake Airshow on July 21, 2018.

Dave Lowery photo.

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## Exhibit committee chairman's report

By Gerry Morrison

Happy New Year to you all and I wish you all good health and happiness in 2019. This year we celebrate our 10th anniversary on May 9th. Much has changed as we worked our way through those first 10 years. If you haven't visited the museum recently I suggest you visit again. In 2018 in the main museum we have four new panels covering some of the roles the RCAF was tasked with during WW2 in the defense of Canada. We also have new video programs in the Herc theatre highlighting the RCAF at work in 2016 and 2017. A new display in the hallway leading to the museum features "Life in the Mess" RCAF style. It explains the reason for and benefit of having a place to relax for the serving members.

In the Cold War Exhibit four, new panels provide additional information about NORAD and RCAF participation in the alliance. We have also added a sidewinder missile and an early version of a laser target designator flight tested at Cold Lake. In 2019 we are planning on adding a video station explaining who the most important Canadians were and their contributions to the development of aviation in Canada between 1909 and 2009.

The committee is in the process of planning future exhibits, some of which are: Women in the RCAF post WW2, RCAF UN operations and RCAF operations after 1990. If you have any suggestions for exhibits contact our Curator Alison Mercer (alison@themilitarymuseums.ca) or me at (gerrymorrison11@gmail.com).

## Curator's update

By Alison Mercer

Intensive digitization of the collection records is now underway. This means that all hand written accession records are going into specialized Excel spreadsheets. Once this is complete, anyone with access will be able to see what we have for artefacts and where they are stored. Estimated completion date: end of April. It's a long process. Additionally, we have completed or are working on:

- Successful grant application to AMA for their operational staffing grant.
- I took two AMA courses in December — museum management and museum research. There will be two more in March.
- Aside from two donations, all extant new donations have been accessioned and stored away.
- Mara, as archivist, is working at transcribing letters. She recently completed a WWI/1920s collection and is now working on a WWII collection.



A short story of how a painting of two CF-104 Starfighters resulted in a series of events below that lead to a good news story through a series of exciting coincidences.

Andrew Henwood, a CF-104 Starfighter pilot, prepared a painting of two CF-104 Starfighters in 1967. He completed this painting during his RCAF tour at Baden-Sollingen, a Canadian air force base in Western Germany.

Dale Anderson, a CF-104 Starfighter pilot, bought the painting from Andrew in Baden-Sollingen during 1967 and kept the painting for more than 50 years. Anderson, during a surge of downsizing activities in the summer of 2018, donated the painting to a thrift store in Calgary, Alberta.

Phil Johnston purchased the painting shortly thereafter for \$10.50 at the thrift store and proceeded to track down the painter, Andrew Henwood, whose name was clearly shown on the right lower corner of the painting. Johnston then decided to return the painting to Henwood, since he had not kept any of the many similar paintings he had produced. Johnston then contacted Erin Collins, a CBC news reporter in Calgary, to cover the story of this coincidental event.

Collins subsequently completed a CBC news clip (internet links below), which was aired by CBC News during August 2018. Henwood eloquently summarized his role as a CF-104 nuclear strike pilot and many other Starfighter pilots who lost their lives during their training and/or tours in Europe.

Doug Fenton, a retired Starfighter pilot and the Canadian Starfighter Association Secretary, forwarded the CBC News clip to other Starfighter pilots in the association.

Bob Perry, also a retired CF-104 pilot and guide at the Cold War Exhibit (CWE) in Calgary, Alberta, read Doug Fenton's email, researched the activities and contacted Phil Johnston with an invitation to attend a personal guided tour of the three fighter aircraft at the Cold War Exhibit Museum in Calgary. Bob also contacted Dale Anderson to learn he was the original owner of the painting.

Bob also contacted the CBC news reporter, Erin Collins who also mentioned that he and his young Son had recently completed a tour of the Cold War Exhibit Museum. Bob was the resident guide at the time, permitted Erin's 4-year-old son to sit in the cockpit of the CF-104 Starfighter, much to his son's delight! This CWE visit all occurred PRIOR to Erin Collins being invited to and completing the CBC news clip of the painting!

Please click any of the two links below to review the CBC News video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAEGFgHH3o&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/thrift-store-painting-returned-to-artist-1.4793592>

# Mike Ricketts awarded Lasting Impact Certificate

Story and photos by Don Mathews



**HRH Princess Anne presents Mike Ricketts (left) the Lasting Impact Certificate.**

On Wednesday, November 7th, 2018 at Government House in Edmonton, Michael J. Ricketts, an Air Force Museum Society of Alberta director-at-large, was presented with a Lasting Impact Certificate for his work with The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, Canada.

The Lasting Impact Certificate, is signed by His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal, Princess Anne presented the certificate on behalf of the board of directors of the award in appreciation of, and recognition for, meritorious service, dedication and the help Mike has given to the youth of Canada.

In 1982, Major (Retired) Mike Ricketts, M.M.M., C.D. was challenged by the Alberta Provincial Committee of the Air Cadet League of Canada to take on the task of turning around 538 (Buffalo) Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron. To help in this endeavour, he introduced the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program. In 1996, Mike was appointed as a member of the Divisional Council of the Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. He served as president from 2000-2002 and continued to serve as a past-president until he stepped down from council in 2018.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a self-development program available to all young people ages 14-24 equipping them with life skills to make a difference to themselves, their communities and the world. To date, over 500,000 young people from Canada and ten million youth in 143 countries have been motivated to undertake a variety of voluntary and challenging activities in the areas of service, skill development, physical recreation and undertaking an adventurous journey. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award was founded by, HRH Prince Phillip in 1956 in the United Kingdom and began in Canada in 1963.

The Air Force Museum Annual Golf Tournament was held at SilverWing golf course on Wed, August 8th, 2018.

We attracted 55 golfers and had 15 sponsors. We met all of our financial objectives plus some. Sponsorship and donations came from:

Don Norrie, Sprung Instant Structures, Jan&Tom Foss, Executive Flight Centre, 783 Calgary Wing RCAFA, Rapid 3D, BMP Management, Avid Home Watch, Calgary Airport Authority, Todd Wytrychowski, Lexus and Gordon Norrie.

The tournament this year will take place at the same course on 7 August.



**McGillivray team, 3rd low net**



**Executive Flight Centre, 2nd low net**



**Executive Management team, 2 of team low net**



**Wayne Bill team, low gross**

# A New Year's Eve war story.

Many of us enjoyed the tradition of spending New Year's Eve with friends and family as we celebrated the arrival of 2019. In keeping with the season, this issue features a captivating New Year's Eve story that took place in 1944, told in first person by a retired Royal Canadian Air Force Flying Officer.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of telling your stories. They expand civilians' understanding of our world. These moments in time from military life do not necessarily have to be about war... they can be about great friendship, pride, boredom, fear, humour, love, despair... by reaching out and telling your story, people will reach back, and that is the beginning of shared understanding, respect and the building of a community.

"We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human."

- Hannah Arendt

Thank you to our storytellers, supporters and all gallery visitors for making 2018 a very successful year for War In Pieces. We look forward to connecting with you and sharing more of your stories in 2019.

Melanie Timmons, executive director, War Stories Society

I grew up in Regina, and in 1941 at the age of 18, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force so that I could learn to fly. I flew a Spitfire in WWII, which was a 12-cylinder fighter aircraft known as a day flyer. We never flew at night.

On December 31, 1944, our squadron of 12 left Brussels at 3:00 p.m. We crossed the Rhine River at the intersection of the Holland, Belgium and German borders, as this was our point of entry into Germany. We had never encountered Germans here. We climbed to 23,000 feet and it was colder than the devil up there because we had no heat!

I felt my plane get hit and I heard it too. There were no German airplanes around, so it had to be flak. My dashboard hadn't changed and everything seemed to be fine, but a minute later, I was told by my wingman that I was streaming oil. I immediately thought about landing but knew I didn't want to land in Germany! I radioed to our leader that we were both leaving the formation and immediately headed west to get across that border.

I stayed at the same altitude to maximize my glide. In just five minutes the needle on my oil gauge sank to empty. I shut the engine off so it wouldn't seize, dropped my speed to 120 mph, and descended gradually. With the engine off, I lost everything – no power or radio controls whatsoever.

I pulled my map out of my boot and located Eindhoven, Holland, and hoped I would make it to the base there. The next problem was how to put my wheels down with no power. I vaguely remembered



From left to right: F/O Ken Williams, unknown pilot, F/L "Doug" Douglas, F/Sgt. McGregor, P/O Chuck Darrow, and Gordon Hill.

from my early instruction that somewhere in the cockpit, there was an emergency supply of compressed carbon dioxide in a tube designed for this very purpose. I found it and activated the carbon dioxide. It pushed the hydraulics to allow my wheels to lower and lock down!

My wingman returned to the squadron once I landed on an airfield. To my surprise a Canadian kid showed up driving a tractor and asked, "Where can I take you sir?" I thought I saw a spitfire squadron in the corner of the base. He confirmed that and told me it was RAF. The kid towed my Spitfire in, and while they arranged a bed for me, I asked to be taken to the Canadian Officers' mess.

I happened to run into two officers with whom I had flown in Canada, and since it was New Year's Eve, we cracked a scotch. It was really nice to have someone to talk to even though it wasn't my own mess, and it was a pleasant New Year's Eve. They even bought the scotch! A British mechanic called and told me that my oil cooler needed to be replaced, but they had a spare and could replace it that night.

The next morning my plane was fixed, gassed up and ready to go.

I went to my plane, climbed in, put on my parachute, gloves and helmet and tried to start the engine. Nothing. It needed a boost, so I climbed out and walked to a nearby control truck to tell them. Just then, we heard shots fired.

In that instant, the Germans had attacked all allied airfields simultaneously. My plane was shot and since it had a full tank of gas, it blew up completely.

Later that day I managed to hitch a ride back to Belgium in an Anson, and slept in my own bed on my base in Brussels that night.

Gordon Hill, Flying Officer (Ret'd)